Two very *Godly and comfortable* Letters, written ouer *into England.*

THE ONE TO A GODly *and zealous Lady:* wherin the Annabaptiſts errour is confuted and the ſinne againſt the Holye Ghoſte plainly declared.

¶ *THE OTHER AN* anſwer to a Godly Merchants *Letter: written for his comfort,* being greeued with the heauye burden of ſinne: wherin is declared the true confeſſion of ſinne.

Written by T. C.

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A comfortable *Letter written to* a Godly and zealous Lady: *Wherin the Annabap*tiſts error is breefly confuted, and the ſin againſt the holy Ghoaſt, plainlye declared.

MADAME, where as it pleaſed your good Ladyſhip to require me to write unto you my minde, concerning the true ſence and meaning of this place of S. *Paule*,

in

Heb.6.4.

in his Epistle to the He-
brewes: *It cannot bee that
they which were once light-
ned & haue taſted of the he-
uenly gift, and were become
partakers of the holy Ghoſt,
5 and haue taſted of the good
woord of God, & of the pow-
er of the Worlde to come: if
they fall awaye (and as con-
6 cerning themſelues, crucifie
the ſonne of God afreſh, and
make a mocke of him,) that
they ſhould be renued againe
by repentance.*

The errour of the Nouatians, and now of the Anabaptiſts.

Madame, many in time paſt, and at this preſent day miſtaking this text, and not truly vnderſtanding it, bothe haue béene and are incombred with the *Nouacians* erroure: which is, That after man by Baptiſme and the holye Ghoſte is regenerated, and hath taſted of the grace of God, and hath embraced Chriſte and his holye woorde, if he fall to ſinne againe, he is without remedye of Saluation.

Undoubtedly this is a verye damnable errour, inough to bring all them that are infected therewith to deſperation. But albeit they grounde this their errour upon this aforeſaied texte of S. Paule, and certaine other textes: yet they miſſe the Marke, because they take this Scripture too ſtraitlye, not referring it to manye other places of ſcripture, which plainely ſheweth: That when ſoeuer and how often ſo euer a Sinner repenteth him truely of his ſinnes, and cõmitteth him ſelfe with a ſure faith vnto yͤ mercy of God through Chriſt: God receiueth him againe to grace and ſaluation.

Doubtleſſe *No prophecy in the ſcripture hath any pri-* 1.Pet.1.20.
uate interpretation, but muſt needes be expounded according to the generall articles of the Chriſtian faith, and agreeable to other textes of holy ſcripture, and ſo muſt this text be alſo.

Now trueth it is, that there is almoſt innumerable textes in holy ſcripture, that moſt plainlye do declare: that whenſoeuer a true repentaunte ſinner by vnfained faith returneth vnto God, and aſketh mercy for Chriſts ſake, he ſhall vndoubtely haue it. And albeit the holye ſcripture is full of ſuch places, yet heere by Gods grace, I will ſhew and rehearſe to you ſome of them, to giue you occaſion to marke them, and ſuch like places as you ſhal finde almoſt in euery leafe of the *Byble.* Pro.24.16.

A iuſt man falleth ſeauen times, and riſeth vp againe. Marke ẏ ſcripture ſaith: *he riſeth vp againe.*

The wickedneſſe of the Ezech.33. *wicked ſhall not hurt him,* *whenſoeuer he conuerteth.*

Note what it ſaith: *when ſoeuer he conuerteth.*

Eſay.55. *Let the vngodly man forſake his owne waye, and the vnrighteous his owne imaginations and turne againe vnto the Lord, ſo ſhall he be mercifull vnto him.*

Iere.3. *Thou diſobedient Iſrael turn again (ſaith the Lord) and I will not let my wrath fall vpon you.*

Iere.8. *Thus ſaith the Lord: doo men fall ſo, that they riſe not vp againe? or if Iſrael doo repent, will not God turne againe to them?*

Zach.1. *Turne you vnto me* **(ſayth the Lord God of hoſtes,)** *and I will turn me vnto you.*

Apoc.2. *Remember from whence thou art falne, and doo the firſte*

firſte woorke.

Marke in the Goſpel of Luke.15.
Luke, the example of the vnthriftie Sonne.

And Chriſte ſaid vnto Peter, *Peter I haue prayed* Luke.22.
for thee, that thy faith faile not: and when thou art conuerted, ſtrengthen thy Brethren.

Marke, he ſaith: *When thou art conuerted, &c.* Lo, if you weigh theſe places of ſcripture afore alleadged, and almoſt innumerable moe of the ſame ſorte, you ſhall perceiue euidentlye, that though A Chriſtian haue ſinned neuer ſo ofte (as who doth not dayly offende God) yet when ſoeuer he returneth vnto God by true repentance (which conſiſteth of inward contrition, & a ſure faith in Chriſt Jeſu) he is aſſured by the wordes of God to recouer, and receiue againe the grace, fauour, and mercy of God, which therow his diſobedience he had worthely loſt: and immediatly to enioy ful, abſolute, and perfect remiſſion and forgiueneſſe of all his ſinnes, through Jeſus Chriſte, in whome he repoſeth all his faith, truſte and confidence of ſaluation. The Goſpell aſſureth him no leſſe ſaying: *So God loued the world that he gaue his onely begotten ſonne, that who ſo euer beleeueth in him ſhoulde not periſhe,*

Ioh. 3.

periſhe, but haue euer laſting life.

More ouer, if you marke wel the examples of godlye men, which are regiſtred in holye ſcripture, you ſhall plainelye perceiue, that albeit they were highly in Gods fauour, yet for all that many of thē had great falles and committed very haynous offences, but they did riſe vp againe returning to Gods mercye by true repentance & faith, and ſo recouered againe their former grace, which they thorowe their owne folly had loſt.

Aaron.

Aaron was ſo muche fauoured of God, that by Gods calling hee was made the high biſhop and curate ouer his People. And yet at the light requeſt of the Iſraelites, he let them make and worſhip the Golden Calfe, contrarye to his Conſcience: by reaſon wherof bothe hee and they committed that moſt deteſtable ſinne of Idolatrye. and yet he by true repentaunce and faithe, returning to grace was ſaued.

Dauid.

David Gods deare darlinge, after that hee had the knoweledge of God, and had muche talked of his grace, beeing indued aboundauntlye with the holy Ghoſt, and gratious giftes from aboue, fell both into the ſinns of avoultry and murther. And yet by true and vnfained repentance, returning to Gods mercy, was accepted and receiued againe into Gods fauour.

Manaſſes

Manaſſes alſo contrary vnto his Conſcience, fell willinglye to Idolatrye, but yet he roſe againe by true repentaunce and faithe, and recouered againe the grace of god.

The ſinfull Corinthian 1.Cor.5.

So likewiſe that wicked man of the Citie of *Corinthus*, whom S.Paule ſtraitlye charged the *Corinthians* to excommunicate and exclude out of the holy congregation of Chriſtian men, and that they ſhoulde neither eate nor drinke with him,

he.

because of his open and abhominable crime of inceſtuous outragious whoredome: and yet when he declared him ſelf to be truelye repentant for his great and infamous ſin: 2.Cor. 2. Saint *Paule* admoniſhed them with all gentleneſſe and Chriſtian Charity to receiue him again into the Congregation as a Chriſtian Brother, and ſo to eſteeme him and take him.

What ſhall I ſaye of Peter. *Peter* Chriſtes Apoſtle? Had not he a ſure knowledge of Chriſte, confeſſing him openlye before all the Apoſtles, *Thou be very Chriſt, the ſonne of the liuing God?* Was not he and

then

ſpirit taught with the holy Ghoſt and grace from aboue, vnto whom Ieſus Chriſte ſaid: *Bleſſed art thou Symon the ſonne of Ionas, for fleſh and bloud hath not opened this vnto thee, but my Father which is in heauen.* And yet after all this, he had ſuch a fall, that contrary to his owne conſcience, willingly without any compulſion or threates, or impriſonment, he did moſt cowardlye and ſhamefullye forſake and deny Chriſt, not without blaſphemy, ſwearing that he neuer knew him, curſing and committing him ſelfe to the Diuell if euer he had to do with him. Math.16.

What wolde the *Nouacian* and *Anabaptiſtes* ſaye vnto this? Was it not a fall? Could there be anye greater ſinne then this? Was it not done of knowledge? Was it not done willinglye? Was it not agaynſt his owne conſcience? Yea doubtleſſe, it was no leſſe but againſte his owne conſcience. But yet thankes be vnto almightye God, it was not the ſinne of blaſphemye againſt the holy ghoſt, neither the ſin vnto death, the which Saint Iohn ſpeaketh of, for hee continued not therin vnto his ende, but immediatly he went forth of the Biſhops houſe and wept

1.Ioh.5.

bitterly, very muche lamenting his heinous offence, and by faith he returned again vnto Chriſt knowing his mercye to be infinite and without meaſure: and ſo he was accepted vnto grace againe, & Chriſt appeared vnto him (to his greate comforte) after he roſe againe from deathe to life and afterwardes ſending downe his holye ſpirite, indued him with wonderfull giftes of grace from aboue. And then Peter became a ſtrong Champion, ſetting forth Chriſte to be the only ſauiour of the whole world preaching and openlye confeſſing him before all

Mar. 26.

men, without any feare, either of ye Scribes, Pharisies or Magistrates.

Now good Madam, lay this example of S. *Peter* to this text of S. *Paule* to the Hebrewes: *It can not be that they which were once lightned, &c. If they fall away &c. that they should be renued again by repentance.*

If a man would apply the aforesaide example of S. *Peter* unto this text of S. *Paule*, he would thinke that *Peter* should utterly haue been cast away from Gods fauour, mercy and grace. For first it can not be denied, but ye hee was once lightned, that is: indued with the true knowledge of Christe to be the

only

onely pollutions and filth out of the woꝛlde. Secondlye, he had alſo taſted of the heauenly gift, which was a true faith in Chꝛiſt Jeſus, openlye confeſſing the ſame before al the Apoſtles, being fully perſwaded in his owne conſcience what Chꝛiſt was. 2 Thirdlye, that *Peter* was become partaker of the holy Ghoaſt, and had taſted of the good woꝛde of God, it appeareth euidently by Chꝛiſtes ſentence, ſaying: *Bleſſed art thou* Symon, *for fleſh and blond* (that is man) *ſhewede hee not vnto thee but my father which is in heauen.* Which was by the inſpiration of his holy ſpirit. 3

Finally Peter had a taſte of the world to come. For hee did ſee in the mountaine the transfiguration Mat.17. of Chriſt, & ſo did Iames the more, and Iohn the Euangeliſt alſo. Where in the preſence of them all Chriſt was transfigured and ſhewed him ſelfe vnto them in the forme of a glorified body, *So that his face did ſhine as the Sun and his clothes appeared as white as the light.* There appeared alſo among thē Moyſes and Elias. And euen there the cleare voice of God the father of heauen, was plainlye hearde among thē out of ẏ cloud, ſaying vpon Chriſte *This is my dearlye beloued ſonne,* *in whom I delight, heare him.* Loe, all this and much more Peter bothe hearde and ſawe, beyng almoſte continuallye in Chriſtes companye, eating and drinking with him, hearing daylye his heauenly doctrine, preaching and teaching, ſeeing euerye where (as occaſiõ ſerued) his great and wonderfull miracles. And yet for all this, what a great fall Peter had, it appeareth plainely by his denyall of Chriſt his louing maiſter and ſauioure, and by the circumſtaunces thereof, whiche I touched before. And yet to make Peters fall more horrible, Chriſt ſaide vnto him and fore

al

Math.10.

at the other his Apoſtles, [illegible] to preache the Goſpell of ſaluation. *Whoſo confeſſeth me before men, I ſhall confeſſe him alſo before my Father.* Alas [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]

before

before men? Ah good ſoule what ſhal become of thee? How wilt thou anſwere for thy ſelf? for it ſemeth here plainly, that both S. *Paule* in the former alleged place to ỹ Hebrewes and alſo Chriſt him ſelfe in the ſcripture afore reherſed haue giuen ſentence of condemnation agaynſt thee. Wherefore, bothe the *Nouatian* & the *Anabaptiſt*, grounding them ſelues uppon theſe two places of holy ſcripture, will plainelye pronounce thee to be a reprobate, and that thou art diſpatched, and utterlye caſt awaye from all hope of ſaluation. But here let us not to lightlye paſſe ouer, but earneſtlye weigh and deeply conſider, what may be ſaid in this matter in Peters behalfe. And firſte it may be rightlye anſwered, that that place of S. Paul vnto the *Hebrewes*, maketh nothing againſte S. Peter, neither yet againſte any Chriſtian man, how grieuouſlye or how often ſoeuer he hath ſinned: ſo that he hath not vtterlye forſaken Chriſte and fallen cleane awaye from him. For S. Paule ſaith: *It cannot be that they which were once lightned, &c. If they fall away they ſhould be renued by repentance.*

Heb. 6.

Marke heer diligentlye that S. Paule ſaithe: If they fall away. He ſaithe not If they fall, But: if they fall away. For it is not all one thing to fall: and to fall away.

It is not all one thing to fall, and to fall away

For *Peter* did fall, but hee did not fall away frō Chriſte, but returned vnto him againe. An olde prouerb it is: A man runneth very far, that neuer returneth againe. All we chriſtians do daily fal for we daily break Gods cōmandements, but yet we do not fal away frō chriſt neither refuſe we him to be our Sauiour, but acknowledging our manifold ſinnes and offences: we dayly returne vnto him againe by true repentaunce, faithe and a-

A Prouerb.

mendmēt of life, nothing doubting of his great & vnmeaſurable mercy towardes vs.

Who falleth away frō Chriſte.

They fal away frō chriſt ỹ vtterly forſake him & refuſe him to be their ſauiour, & neuer returneth vnto him againe to obtaine his mercy, but are becom plain *Apoſtataes*, vtterlye forſaking ỹ chriſtiā faith making but a mocke of Chriſte, perſeuering in their obſtinate *Apoſtaſie* & vnbeleefe, euen till their liues end: as did *Iudas* the traitor, *Iulianus* Apoſtata *Simon Magus*, *Porphirius*, *Hymeneus* and *Alexander* the Copperſmith.

1.Tim.1.
2.Tim.4.

Secondarily as touching the ſaying & thretning of

Chriſt, ſaying: *He that denieth me before men, I ſhall deny him before my father.*

Math. 10.

A good and general rule to be noted.

It is to be conſidered that al the terrible threatnings that are in the holy ſcripture threatned againſt great ſinners, are threatned conditionally, that is to ſaye: if the ſinners do not truely repent and return vnto God by Faith & amendement of life, this plague and puniſhment or that, ſhall light vpon them. But if they at the Preaching, reading, or hearing of Gods holy word, do repent & return vnto God, by faith & godly life, then that Plague threatned ſhall not once touch them.

Example by the *Niniuites* vppon whome *Ionas* Gods Miniſter and preacher, (or rather God by him) pronounced this terrible iudgement, ſaying: *There are yet Forty daies, and then ſhall* Niniue *bee ouerthrown.* But there, as the Scripture ſayth: the people of *Niniuy* beleued God and earneſtly repented them of their great ſinnes, and ſo was the ſentence of God reuerſed, and the Citye ſaued and not ouerthrowne.

Ionas. 3.

So likewiſe this terrible ſentence of Chriſte: *He that denyeth mee before men, I ſhall deny him before my Father,* muſt needes haue this condition ioy-

A condiciō.

ned with it: *If he doeth not repent, neither returne again:*

But *Peter* did bothe repent and returne againe vnto Christe. For albeit his Faithe was weake and faynte, (as was the faith of all the Apoſtles) yet it was not vtterlye extincte. For Chriſte had ſaide vnto him before. Symon, *I haue praied for thee that thy faith faile not.* Luke. 22.

And in any wiſe take hede, and note this well: Chriſte ſaid not: He that denyeth me, I ſhal denye him, though hee repente and return. But remember that that Chriſt ſaid: *I came not to call the righteous, but ſinners to repentaunce.* Peter therfore Mat. 9.

repented, and returned unto Chriſt again, and ſo was receiued into grace and was ſaued. Wherfore good M. Iohn, in this hard Texte of S. Paule unto the *Hebrewes*, way wel this condition: (*if they fall away*) for they only fall away, which cōmit that moſte horrible crime, which is called in the holy ſcripture, *The ſinne unto death, blaſphemy againſt the ſpirit, and ſinne againſt the holy ghoſt which neuer ſhall be forgiuen, neither in this worlde, neither in the worlde to come.*

Queſtion. But here it might be demaunded, what that ſinne againſte the holye Ghoſt is, and wherein it differeth from all other greuous ſinnes. Whervnto I anſwere. That ther is difference in ſinne, it may cleerlye be gathered of Chriſtes wordes, ſaying: *I ſaye unto you, All ſinne and blaſphemye ſhall be forgiuen vnto men, but the blaſphemye againſte the ſpirite ſhall not be forgiuen vnto men.*

Anſwer.

Math.12.

Loe, heere is the matter plainelye opened by our Sauiour Chriſte, what kinde of ſinnes ſhall be forgiuen, and what neuer forgiuen. *Blaſphemye againſte the ſpirite ſhall neuer bee forgiuen:* all other ſinne and Blaſphemye ſhall bee forgiuen.

And Chriſte in ſayinge: *All ſinne ſhall be forgiuen,* compriſeth both originall ſinne, and alſo actuall ſin.

Three ſorts of Sinnes.
Sinne.
Blaſphemy.
Blaſphemye againſt the Spirite.

Moreouer Chriſt ſpeaketh here of three ſortes of ſinnes. The firſt he calleth *Sinne*, the ſecõd *Blaſphemy*, and the third *Blaſphemye againſte the Spirite.* Which the ſcripture alſo calleth, *The ſin vnto death, and the ſinne againſt the holy ghoſt.* Thoſe thre kindes of ſinnes, and the difference of euery of them, I intend by Gods helpe ſeuerallye to declare vnto you ſo breefelye as I can, and ſo for this time commit you vnto God, and firſte conſider well what ſinne is.

Sinne is every wilfull diſobedience, do or deed, that is done contrary unto the Lawe and Commaundementes of God, without murmur, grudg or evill ſpeaking, either againſt the Lawe, commaundementes, or God himſelfe, that is the maker and giver of the law. 1 Sinne.

As is Idolatrye, ſuperſtition, periurye, ſwearing unadviſedlye, breaking of the holye Daye, diſhonouring father and Mother, Murther, malice, hatred, envy, wrath, ſtrife, treaſon, ſedition, ſlaunder, whoredome, theft and ſuch like.

All theſe and ſuch other are called, and are indeed ſinne ſo long as the doers of them do neither murmur, repine, grudge nor ſpeake euill againſte God or his holye Lawe: neither allowe in their conſcience the thing and euill that they do but rather do utterlye diſallowe, accuſe and condemne in their owne conſcience thoſe their owne damnable actes, as euill and deteſtable.

The ſeconde kinde of ſinne is Blaſphemye: marke it well, and con-
2. ſider howe it differeth firſt from ſinne, and then from the ſinne againſte the holy ghoſt. Blaſphemy.

Blaſphemye is more haynouſe then is ſinne alone, for all blaſphemye is ſinne, but all ſinne is not blaſphemye. For truth it is, that blaſphemye comprehendeth in it ſelfe bothe ſinne, and alſo a murmure, grudge, reuiling, or euill ſpeaking, ſlaunder and reproche of God and Godlynes, but it is alwayes coupled with ignoraunce and vnbeleife, and proceedeth not of ſuch obſtinate malice as continueth to the ende of the life, as doth the ſinne againſt y holy Ghoſt. In this ſinne of blaſphemye S. Paule offended before his conuerſion vnto the faith of Chriſt Jeſu. For thus he ſpeaketh of him ſelfe.

Before, I was a blaſphemer, and a perſecutour, and a Tyraunt, but I obtained mercy, becauſe I did it ignorauntlye in vnbeleefe. Loe, howe it is plain and euident, that this blaſphemye, though it be a greate offence, yet it is remiſſible and forgiueable, and is not excluded from Grace and mercy, becauſe it proceedeth of Ignoraunce, and not of knowledge, nor of obſtinate malice, that doth continue to the liues end. Neither is it the ſin unto death: and therfore we maye lawfullye praie for ſuch blaſphemers. And S. Iohn ſaith: *If any man* 1.Iohn.5. *ſee his Brother ſin a ſin that is not unto death, let him aſke* *and he ſhall giue him life.*

In this ſimple blaſphemy (for ſo we may call it) many of the Iewes offended, taking Chriſte to be nothing leſſe, then the Sonne of Dauid or Meſſias, becauſe his parents were very poore, and himſelfe ſuppoſed to be but a poore Carpenters ſonne, which bare but a ſimple port in the worlde. Yea, and ſome of them that crucified Chriſte, were ouerwhelmed in this ſimple blaſphemy. And therefore Chriſte prayed for them, ſaying: *Father forgiue them, for they know not what they doe.* Luke.23. So Peter in his Sermon excuſed the crucifiers of Chriſte, ſaying.

ing. *Now deare brethren I knowe that you haue doon it thorough ignoraunce. &c.* Acts. 3. *Repent you therfore and returne, that your ſinnes may be doon away.*

So did S. Steuen alſo praye for his perſecutors, whom before he called *Stifnecked, aduerſaries* Acts,7. *of the holy ghoſt, Traytours and murtherers of Chriſte.* Doubtleſſe he would not haue praied for thē ſo earneſtly, vnles their ſinnes had bin forgiueable. And therefore their ſinne and offence was no more but ſimple blaſphemy.

The thirde kinde of 3 ſinne, is blaſphemye againſt the Spirite.

They committe blaſ-

phemy

phemye agaynſte the ſpirite, or ſinne againſte the Holye Ghoſte, which wyllinglye, vpon knowledge, and aduiſedly contrarie to their owne conſcience, doo denye, forſake, impugne, ſlaunder, reuile, and perſecute the plaine, open, manifeſte, and knowne trueth, ſtiffely, maliciouſlye, and obſtinatly, perſeuering and continuing without vnfained repentance in that their wilful blindnes and obſtinate malice ſo lõg as they liue in this worlde. As did Pharao, Saul, Herod, *Iudas* the traitor, *Iulianus* Apoſtata, *Porphirius*, *Hymeneus* and *Alexander* the Copperſmith, with other.

Blaſphemy againſt the Spirite.

But marke this diligently that we can not (as farre I can perceiue) certainly iudge of theſe Blaſphemers againſte the ſpirite before the time of theire departure out of this preſent life because we cannot certainlye knowe, whether at the ende of their life they can repent and by faith returne and take hold of the mercy of God or not.

Coniectur-
are vncer-
taine.

We maye coniecture, but we cannot (as I ſuppoſe) certainlye define of them. Let vs conſider that the thiefe that hung on the righte hande of Chriſte, euen at the laſt houre, repẽted him with a ſtrong and faithefull

Luke.23.

prayer, committed him ſelfe wholy vnto yͤ mercy of Chriſt, and was ſaued. In conſideratiõ whereof, let vs thinke it to be our bounden duetye (as the Prophets, Chriſt and his Apoſtles did) to reuoke and cal back againe open ſinners and blaſphemers to earneſt repentance for their owne ſinfulnes, and to haue a ſure truſte in the mercy of God, and in the merite of Chriſtes paſſion and death, though they bee euen at the departure out of this preſent life. For it is neuer to late ſo long as life laſteth. Let vs therefore with all feruentneſſe call vppon them and exhorte them in any wiſe, with a good courage and a ſure and undoubtfull faythe: alſo, call and crye for gods mercy, for his ſweet ſonne our ſauiour Jeſus Chriſtes ſake: and undoubtedly they ſhal haue it. For ſith the beginning of the worlde hitherto was there neuer one that in faith aſked mercy hartilye, but hee had it, thorow the gracious goodneſſe of our almightye mercifull ſauiour Jeſus Chriſt, unto whom with the Father and the holye Ghoſt, be all Lawde and Praiſe, worlde without end. Amen.

An

An aunſwer vnto a godly Merchants letter, wherin is plainlye opened the true way of confeſſing our ſinnes.

THE grace and peace of GOD, bee giuen vnto you, thorough Ieſus Chriſte, &c. Whereas in your laſt Letters, to mee moſte Truſtye and aſſured Freende, you inſtantlye deſired me to write vnto you, what

I

I haue read and learned in holye Scripture, touching *The Confeſſion of Sinnes*. Truelye Sir this your reaſonable requeſt, I woulde, if I were able right gladly ſatisfie.

But as you know, I am farre vnable to pen this matter according to the woorthineſſe therof.

Neuertheleſſe, when I conſider with my ſelfe, how muche I am bounden to you, for your louing kindeneſſe dayly ſhewed to my poore kinſefolke and freendes in *England*, I can-not but thinke it to bee my bounden duetye ſomewhat to gratifye you againe. And albeit that ignoraunce, rudeneſſe

neſſe of ſtile, and lacke of learning plucketh mee backe from the handling of this matter, yet the conſideratione of youre greate diſcretion and gentleneſſe pricketh me forwarde to attempte to what I can doo therein. Certes, I nothing doubte, but that you will gentlye accept my ſimple rudeneſſe, good will, and endeuour in this behalfe, no leſſe then if the matter were Gloryouſlye garuiſhed with Eloquence, and ſet foorthe with the moſte profitable perſwaſions of the freſheſt Philoſopher or Rethoritian in bothe Vniuerſities in *England*, I truſte you will credite and imbrace the truethe though it bee neuer ſo baſely and homelye written or declared vnto you. For the trueth ſhall abide and flouriſh, when al prophane painted perſwaſions and fond phariſaicall phantaſies ſhall vaniſh awaye, and be ſcattered abroad as drye duſt before a whirle wind. Wherfore to keepe you no longer from this matter, I ſhall by Gods grace, ſo breefelye as I can declare vnto you, what I haue learned & read in holye ſcripture, concerning this article, of confeſſion of ſinnes. And that is this that followeth.

Of Confeſſion
of Sinnes.

The holie ſcripture, dothe diuerſlye in ſondry places ſet forth ÿ trouth of the Confeſſion of ſinnes. In ſome places it maketh mencion of a general and ſollemne Confeſſion openly made of all the People being aſſembled and gathered togeather, at the appointment, calling and exhortation of their high Magiſtrate, Byſhoppe, Curate, or publique Miniſter of Gods Worde,

A general Confeſſion.

C The

The cauſe thereof was commonlye ſome greate plague, vengeance or puniſhment, wherwith God ſcourged them for theire ſinfull, hainous, and abhominable offences, committed and don by them and their forefathers, example thereof we haue in the ſecond boke of Eſdras, where it is thus written.

Neem. 9.

In the foure and twenty day of this moneth, came the Children of Iſraell *together with faſting and ſackclothes, and earth vpon them, and ſeperated the ſeede of* Iſraell *from all the ſtraunge Children, and ſtoode and knowledged their ſinnes and wickedneſſes of their fathers, & ſtoode*

ſtoode vp in their place, and read in the booke of the Law of the Lord their God, foure times on the daye, &c. And after a ſolemne rehearſall of the iudgementes, and greate mercifulneſſe of God declared in holye ſcripture: they conclude thus ſaying: *Thou (O God) art righteous in al that thou haſte brought vpon vs, for thou haſte doone right. As for vs, wee haue beene vngodlye, and our Kinges, Princes, Preeſtes and Fathers haue not doon after thy Law, nor regarded thy commaundements & thine earneſt exhortations, wherwith thou haſt exhorted them, & haue not ſerued thee in thy Kingdome, & in thy greate* *goods that thou gaueſt them &c. and are not conuerted from their wicked works. Beholde, therefore are wee in bondage this day. Yea, euen in the lande which thou gaueſt vnto our Fathers to enioye the Fruites and goodes therof, beholde, there are we bondmen, &c.*

Loe, Héere is a ſolemne open Confeſſion. Would God that this example of publique Confeſſion of ſinnes, were well practiſed through out all Chriſtendome, namely at this day, ſéeing yͤ the plagues of God do daily increaſe more and more vpon vs, our ſinful liues & abhominations iuſtlye deſeruing the ſame and much more.

There

Three more ſort of confeſon of ſins.

There are alſo thrée more ſortes of Confeſſion of ſinnes, declared in the holy Scriptures.

The firſt is ſecret confeſſion of ſinne only vnto God.

The ſecond is an open confeſſion before men.

The third is a priuate and ſecret confeſſiō made vnto man.

Confeſsion vnto God only.

As touching ẏ firſte, it is an humble and lowly confeſſion of ſins, made vnto God, euen from the hart. As when a ſinner examineth his life by ẏ commãdements of God, & ſo findeth his conſcience burdned and encombred with ſinne, and féeleth thereby what danger of damnation

nation that he is in: this feeling of his ſicke conſcience wil greatly moue him to ſeeke a Phiſition. And when hee perceiueth that there is no medicine will heale his diſeaſe but onely the mercye of God, he will not ceaſe to make all the ſuite that hee can to obtaine it. Hee will without any delaye proſtrate him ſelfe before God, and with an humble, lowlye, and contrite hart & minde acknowledg him ſelfe greeuouſlye to haue offended his Godlye maieſty, in thought, conſent, delectation, worde, and deede. He will neuer leaue off his lamentable ſuite and faithfull praier and requeſte of this his bountifull mercye, till he obteine it. The ſwelling rage of his putrified conſcience will neuer be aſſwaged, till the precious oyle of Gods mercy haue ſuppled it, mittigated it, quieted it, and vtterly cured and healed it. Of this maner of confeſſion the holye Scripture doth many times treate, both by plaine authoritye and examples. By authority.

Authoritie.
1.Iohn.1.

If we knowledge our ſinnes (ſaith S.Iohn) *God is faithfull and iuſte to forgiue vs our ſinnes, and to clenſe vs from all vnrighteouſneſſe.*

Examples there bee manye. Of which I will at this time content my nation that he is in: this feeling of his ſicke conſcience wil greatly moue him to ſeeke a Phiſition. And when hee perceiueth that there is no medicine will heale his diſeaſe but onely the mercye of God, he will not ceaſe to make all the ſuite that hee can to obtaine it. Hee will without any delaye proſtrate him ſelfe before God, and with an humble, lowlye, and contrite hart & minde acknowledg him ſelfe greeuouſlye to haue offended his Godlye maieſty, in thought, conſent, delectation, worde, and deede. He will neuer leaue off his lamentable ſuite and faithfull prayer and requeſte of this his bountifull mercye, till he obteine it. The ſwelling rage of his putrified conſcience will neuer be aſſwaged, till the precious oyle of Gods mercy haue ſuppled it, mittigated it, quieted it, and vtterly cured and healed it. Of this maner of confeſſion the holye Scripture doth many times treate, both by plaine authoritye and examples. By authority. *If we knowledge our ſinnes* (ſaith S.Iohn) *God is faithfull and iuſte to forgiue vs our ſinnes, and to clenſe vs from all vnrighteouſneſſe.*

Authoritie.
1.Iohn.1.

Examples there bee manye. Of which I will at this time content my ſelf ſelfe with two or three. **Dauid.** King Dauid féelinge the intollerable burthen of his ſinnes, cryed out ſaying.

Pſal, 51. *Haue mercy vpon me (O God) after thy greate goodneſſe, and according vnto thy great mercies, doo awaye mine offences. Waſhe me againe from my wickedneſſe, and clenſe me from my ſinne. For I knowledge my faultes, and my ſinne is euer before me.* **Pſal.24.** *Againſt thee onlye againſte thee haue I ſinned, for thy names ſake (O Lord) be mercifull vnto my ſinne, for it is great,*

The Publicane. Luke.18. The Publican alſo ſaith: *Be mercifull (O God) to me a ſinner,*

This confeſſion and

knowledging of our ſins vnto God if with a contrite and ſorrowfull hart it be done in faith, God (which knoweth the ſecretes of euerye mans minde) will accepte and allowe, though the repentant ſinner vttereth not one woorde with his mouth.

Example of the ſinfull woman, that came vnto Chriſte. She ſpake nothing, but wepte, and lowlye fell down at Chriſtes feete, and waſhed them with the teares of her Eyes, and dryed them with the haires of her heade, and annoynted them with oyntement.

The ſinfull woman. Luke.7.

All which thinges were euident witneſſes of her true and vnfained repentance of her ſinnes, and fruites of her ſure faith, that ſhe had in Chriſtes goodneſſe. For whoſe comfort Chriſte ſaide, *thy ſinnes are forgiuen thee, thy Faith hath ſaued thee: goe thy way in peace.* This earneſt confeſſion of ſinnes vnto God ſhould euerye Chriſtian, daylye practiſe and exerciſe vnfaynedlye.

Of this aforeſaide confeſſion to God, ſpringeth out the Confeſſion of our owne ſinfulneſſe before men.

For he that felt a taſte of the mercye of God, as

Confeſsion of ſinnes before men.

hée ſhall ſée occaſion to glorifie God by his example, will not be aſhamed either priuatelye before one man, or openlye before manye men, yea, thoughe all the whole worlde were preſent, to confeſſe him ſelfe to haue béene an horrible, tranſgreſſour of Gods holye commaundementes. He will nothing doubte, but that hée with this his méeke Confeſſion, ſhall muche glorifie God, and moue the Hearers by his example, to abhorre ſinne, and chaunge their euill life. Of this, wée haue an euidente example in Gods choſen veſſel, S. *Paule*, which after his conuerſation vnto the faith of Chriſte, was not aſhamed many times, openlye to confeſſe before men, what an vnmercifull Tirant & vngratious graft he was againſt the Holye Congregation of Chriſte, before his conuerſion to the Faithe. This thinge alſo aſhamed he not to write and ſet forth to the whole world, ſaying: *I am not woorthy to be called an Apoſtle, becauſe I perſecuted the congregation of God.* And in an other place he ſayth: *I was a blaſphemer and a tirant, &c. And after Chriſt Ieſus came into the Worlde to ſaue ſinners, of whom I am cheefe.*

Act. 22. 16.

1. Cor. 15.
1. Tim. 1.

This example of Saint

Paule verye fewe of the Papiſtes in Englande haue followed, vnleſſe it were by conſtrainte, for feare of bodilye puniſhment. And therefore for my parte, I ſuſpect them to remaine Papiſtes ſtill in their heartes. For if they had vnfainedlye abhorred Papiſtrye, they woulde after this example of S. Paul with al their harts, haue confeſſed thēſelues to be deceiued, and alſo to haue with falſe doctrin deceiued the people, and therfore haue openly and hartelye aſked them mercye for the ſame: by doing wherof doubtleſſe, they ſhoulde very muche haue glorified God.

Few of the Papiſts of England follow this example.

The

3. The thirde manner of Confeſſion of ſinnes is a priuate Confeſſion to man. And that is of two ſortes. The firſte is for the direction, eſtabliſhement and comforte of a mans owne Conſcience towardes God. The other is touching the reconſiliation and confeſſion of a mans faulte and treſpaſſe to his Neighbour whome he hath offended. And as touching the firſt waye of priuate Confeſſion to man, I thinke it is a good and holeſome maner and faſhion conuenient and néedefull to be vſed and obſerued of manye of Gods People for thrée cauſes, that is, for

know-

Priuat confeſsion of ſin is needful to many for knowledg, counſell and comfort.

knowledge, counſell, and for comfort.

For knowledge.

Firſte for knowledge: as when a ſimple man or womā that hath heard little or no preaching of Gods woorde, by reaſon wherof they haue almoſt no knowledge of God or his Commaundementes, neither of the profeſſion of Baptiſme, neither of faith, neither haue they in a manner any knowledge at all of the way of Saluation by Chriſtes death. Is it not needefull (thinke you) for ſuche ignoraunte Perſonnes to hunte and ſeeke out ſome diſcrete and learned miniſter of Gods worde, and to acknowledge vnto him their greate ignorance, and to require at his mouth the knowledg of the Lawe of the Lord, and of the waye of ſaluation? Is it not written,

Malac. 2. *That the Prieſtes lippes ſhoolde be ſure knowledge, that men maye ſeeke the law at his mouth, for he is a meſſenger of the Lord of hoſtes?* It is méete therefore that Prieſtes ſhoulde haue good knowledge in Gods worde, for they are appointed to be ſhepheards ouer the flock of Chriſte, to feed the ſoules of gods People with the delicate food of Gods word, & ſpecially with the holy bread of life Chriſte Ieſu, that came down from heauen to ſaue al his people from their ſinnes. But alas for pitie, the ſpirituall ſhepeheardes in many places of the world, and ſpeciallye in England are verye rude, vnlearned, and vnable to teache other men, becauſe they themſelues lacke the knowledge and righte vnderſtandinge of the holye Scriptures. For how ſhould they teach others, being vnlearned themſelues? Doubtleſſe it hath beene hearde of in not a fewe places of England, that the Pariſhioner hath beene better learned in holye Scripture then the Parſon or Vicar, which thinge is muche to be lamented.

Is

It is very ſtrange that the ſheepe ſhould haue more wit & learning, then the ſheepheard.

Is it not a greate ſhame, yea, it is vtterlye againſt nature, that the ſheepe ſhould be wiſer and better learned thē the ſheepheardes. But no men are ſo muche in this behalfe to be blamed, as the Byſhoppes: partelye for admitting ſuch doltiſhe dodipoles to the office of the miniſtrye: and partelye for the inſtituting to fat beneficies, and to the cure and charge of Chriſtian ſoules, ſo many vnlearned Idyotes, which neither can nor will fede them with the ſpirituall fode of Gods worde. Our Lord redreſſe this matter. Amen.

Secondarily, this pri-

uate

For counſel.

nate Confeſſion is verye needefull for Counſell, ſpeciallye for ſuche perſons, whoſe conſciences are encombred with ſcrupulouſe Superſtition of meates, vowes, or with perplexed doubts in cauſes of matrimonye, of reſtitution of wronge gotten, or withholden goodes: of reconciliation, and ſuch other: Or elſe, if they bee ſore aſſaulted with diuers temptatiõs of their ghoſtly enemy the deuill, and knowe no remedyes how to auoyde them. In all theſe and ſuche like doubtfull caſes, whome ought they rather to goe vnto, and aſke counſell, then of the heardman of their Soules: In worldelye affaires and buſineſſe which waye a man maye defend his righte tytle of enheritaunce, and howe he maye ouerthrowe his aduerſarye that woulde do him wrong, men will ſpare for no laboure nor coſt, but will retaine of their counſel the beſt learnedmen of law that they can get: muche more in ſpirituall matters for the ſoules health, oughte euery true Chriſtian to ſeeke for the beſte learned and diſcreteſt Miniſters of Gods worde, to ſatiſfie their conſciẽces in doubtfull cauſes, and to ſhewe thẽ apte remedies for the auoiding of their ſundrye temptationes of their ghoſtlye enemye the Deuill. For if hee bee a good Spirituall Phiſition, he will miniſter vnto the patient a conuenient medicine for the healing of his ſpirituall ſicknes & diſeaſe. And ẏ patients duety (if he wil recouer his health) is no leſſe then thankfully and obedientlye to imbrace & receiue the wholſome counſel of his ſpirituall Phyſition. For the wiſe man ſaith: *He that is wiſe will be counſelled.* Pro.22. When Iohn the Baptiſt preached in the deſart, *the people came vnto him from Ieruſalem, and all the regions round about Iordan, confeſſing their ſinnes.* Math.3.

And

Luke.3.

And the Publicanes came alſo to be baptiſed, and ſaide vnto him: *Maiſter, what ſhall we doe?* Loe heere the Publicanes, which were verye extorcioners and bribers, at the Preaching of Iohn the baptiſt, came vnto repentaunce, and calling him Maiſter, aſked him counſell how they ſhould order their liues. Then he like a diſcrete ghoſtly Father ſaide vnto them thus: *Require no more then is appointed you.* As though he ſhoulde ſaye: For as muche as heeretofore you haue beene extortioners and verye Caterpillers and bribers, and haue taken more of the poore people, for taſke, tribute and cuſtome then you ought to haue don. Now ſéing you are conuerted and become the diſciples of the heauenlye doctrine, you muſte with all diligence change your euill life vnto a better, and oppreſſe the people no longer, but take your appoynted duetyes and no more. So likewiſe the ſouldiers alſo aſked him and ſaide: *What ſhal we do then?* And hée ſayde vnto them: *Do no man violence nor wrong, and be content with your wages, &c.*

If the ſame trade were likewiſe had in vſe amonge vs that are now liuing, ſo that when ſoeuer our loue were encombred with any greuous temptation, or entangled or ouerthrowne in the ſame if wee could then as ſone as wee coulde poſſible ſhoulde conſulte with our ſouls phiſition, to knowe which waye wee mighte beſte auoyde the temptation hereafter, were it not a godlye faſhion and worthy praiſe and commendation?

An Example.

Example: If a young man being ſore tempted vnto Whoredome, and manye times ouercome of his temptation, hath yelded and giuen him ſelfe ouer vnto the Deuill for that time, committing the very act of filthie whore-

godly pleaſure with admira-
tion yet he (I hope) vpon
the conſideration of his
moſt commodious ſtate that
he ſtandeth in, ſhould giue
thankes vnto God, [illegible]
and [illegible]
the [illegible] and he, and
[illegible]
[illegible]
in [illegible] and
take his laſt [illegible] and
[illegible] therin. Truly this
[illegible]
[illegible] What
[illegible], what great aduan-
tage or [illegible]
on that he then ſtood in,
[illegible] that
[illegible] of the holy
ſcripture [illegible] What [illegible]
[illegible] nor
[illegible] ſhall inherite

the

the kyngdome of God:
ſaye that God ſhall onely
be Iudge and [illegible]
both God and man, and ſa-
tiſfatoure. And he groun-
ding him ſelfe vppon the
Scripture and theſe the
[illegible] vnto his
conſcience, the feare of
God, be humble his har-
den any ſuch [illegible]
accuſe him ſelfe of his
greate ſinnes, and commit
him ſelf by earneſt faith-
full, & continuall prayers
to the mercy of God in
Chriſte Ieſu. And in one
ſuch without any delaye
refuſe that [illegible]
[illegible] ſo ſhamefully wret-
or elſe, though he ſeeme
neuer ſo much outwarde
in this miſerable worlde
to

[illegible] continually [illegible] the ſtone, of whom [illegible] are his great [illegible] and vengeaunce, not beyng in that ſtate the ſeruaunte of God, but the [illegible] ſlaue & bondman, loſt of Gods kingdome and ſubiect to eternall death and damnation.

This thing earneſtly [illegible], diligently [illegible] and deeply [illegible] conſidered. If this ſinner were one of Gods flocke, at the hearing of this terrible [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] againſt this horrible and intollerable ſtate, crye vnto

How a great ſinner ſhould vſe him ſelf to recouer the fauour of God.

cal [illegible] in the true ſpeakable mercye of God in Chriſte Jeſu, truſtinge by his onelye meanes to obtain and get again the fauoure of God, which thorowe his careleſſe diſobedience he had loſt.

And further, he woulde humblye deſire Counſell, which way he might beſt hereafter auoide that horrible crime of ſin by whoredomes and adulterye.

Preſeruatiues againſt whoredome.

¶ When this miniſter ghoſtlye father would exhorte him, in anye wiſe with al his true diligence, dailye and continuallye to practiſe theſe folowinge preſeruatiues and moſte preſent remedies againſt whoredō. That is ſaiyng.

Firſt,

Firſtly, to eſchue idle- 1
neſſe, and alwayes to be ac-
companied in ſome honeſt la-
bour and buſineſſe.

Then to avoid all occa-
ſions of evill, all ſuſpect 2
houſes and wanton com-
pany.

Againe, to beware of
all dangerous communications,
wanton ſongs & ſpeeches 3
of bawdry, neither ſpeak
nor heare ſuch filthy
talke.

Fourthly, to be ſober in li-
ving, and temperate in 4
the uſe of meate, drinke,
ſleepe and apparell.

In all companies, to be daily 5
converſant, with ſuch
companions as are ſober,
chaſte, honeſt, vertuous
and godly, and
religious

Beſide that, to remem-
ber deply what painfull
paſſion and death, Chriſt
ſuffered for our ſinnes
and filthy affections.
[illegible] also the
certaintie and ſoddain-
neſſe of death, and what
a ſtraite accompt and rec-
koning muſt be geuen of
euery idle worde much
more of filthye actes and
vncleanneſſe.

But ſpeciallye whoſe
hartes faithfull and fer-
uent ſeruice, prayer and
ſupplication vnto God,
for that gracious gifte of
chaſtitie and cleanneſſe of
[illegible]
[illegible] continually, to thoſe
[illegible], and will not
leaue nor ſuffer the

[illegible] after [illegible] doctrine of S. Paule, [illegible]

1.Corin.7.

[illegible]

fullye perſwaded, that their ſinnes are forgeuen them: by reaſon wherof, they are halfe in deſperation. Theſe I ſay, haue muche neede of a diſcrete ſpirituall Phiſicion to comfort them, agayne: vnleſſe their weake faith be ſtayed and lifted vp by ſome comfortable exhortacions, of the Goſpels promiſes, of grace and mercy in Chriſt Jeſu, it is to be feared, that their ghoſtly enemy [illegible] them, will ſhortlye bring them to deſperation, and finallye to euerlaſtinge damnacion. Wherfore here this diſcrete ghoſtly Phiſicion) ſhall labour [illegible] [illegible] into this ſpirituall pacients minde ỹ remembraunce, the moſt ſwete, plain and euident promiſes of Gods ayde and aſſiſtance, to be alway ready to them that vſe it in faithfull prayer. Wherfore it is verye nedefull to ſuch weaklings in the Faithe, that are ſo ſore bruiſed in Conſcience, to make all the haſte that they can poſſible, to the [illegible] of their ſoules, and plainely to open and acknowledge their griefe vnto him, deſiring to here of his mouth the comfortable promiſes of grace in Chriſte Jeſu, to ſtaye and lifte vp their weake and feeble Conſciences.

Sainte *Iames* ſaythe:

5 *Pray*

Pray one for another, that ye may bee healed. For (saith hee) *the feruent prayer of a* James.5. *righteous Man auayleth much.* If the prayer of one godly person be of much value, then is the prayers of two good Christians, agreeing together in prayer for any godly purpose, of more value. For Christe sayth: *If two of you shall agree vppon* Math.18. *earth* (*for what thing soeuer it bee that they desire,*) *they shall haue it of my Father which is in Heauen.* For *where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the middest among them.* Marke that Christe sayth, *If two of you shall agree vppon earth &c.*

And where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I presently among them.) And if they [illegible] brethren spoken vnto his [illegible] consisting of these which fiue gathered togither then in Christes name. If they bee (as [illegible] ly they are) there is Christ in companye with them, by the assistaunce of his grace and presence of his Godhead. Againe, if they shall bee assembled and agree to pray together vnto God for the increase and establishmēt of the faith of this spirituall societie, then sayth Christe vnto them thus: *What soeuer you shall agree vpon in earth* *(for what thing ſoeuer it be, that they would deſire) they ſhall haue it of my Father which is in Heauen.* Behold what a comfortable place of ſcripture is this? For we may learne by it, that if there be but three perſons at leaſt gathered together in Chriſtes name for any good and godly purpoſe, then is Chriſte preſent with them. And if they agree to aſke any godly requeſt of God, they ſhall haue it granted. And what thing ſoeuer it bee (ſaith Chriſt) ſo it be a godly requeſt contained within the limites of faith & charitie, (and) agreeing vnto the will of God. For S. *Iohn* ſaithe: *If we ſhall aske* 1. Iohn. 5.

any

owne thinges, according to his will he knoweth it. Amen.

Obiection,

But here one will say: sir, me thinke you take the scriptures to straightly, if you would binde vs to cōfesse our faults only to a priest, or onely to our owne Curate.

Iam.5.

For albeit S. *James* saith *Knowledge your faultes one to another.*

Yet he saith not one lay man with a Priest, nor one Parishioner vnto his owne Curate, and to no other: but he saith generally, *one to an other.* Therefore I thinke that I may aswell make my confession to any other man, as vnto a Priest, or vnto mine owne curate.

Answere.

Truely it is, that thou mayeſt freelye choſe unto thee a diſcrete Chriſtian man, that is well learned in the holye Scripture, and reſorte to him for learning, counſell, and comfort: but yet for all that, there is none ſo mete for the purpoſe in that behalfe as thyne owne Curate (if he be no Papiſt, neither of corrupt iudgement in ŷ ſcriptures, but be godly, diſcrete & well experienced in Gods holye worde.) For he is appointed of God to be heardman of thy ſoule at whoſe mouth thou mayeſt lawfullye requyre learning, counſel and comfort, & yet he is called and appointed ſted of God to preach his to thee, and to all other his Pariſhioners, both priuately and apertly, ſecretly and openly, the Goſpell of Chriſt to comfort thy ſoule when need is. Which preaching of Gods mercy, freely giuen to the faithfull for Chriſts ſake, what other thing is it, then the true abſolution of their ſinnes? For what other thing is the priuate abſolution of the prieſt, but a priuate or ſecret preaching of Chriſts Goſpell. What can the Prieſts more promiſe the ſinner by his abſolution, but thereby to declare vnto him, that if hee repent him of his ſinfull life, and

What is the true abſolution.

for

vnfaynedlye purpoſe to amend, repoſing his whole faith, truſt and confidence in the promiſes of grace and mercy in Chriſte Jeſu, that then Gods truth ſhall ſaue him for Chriſts ſake. Can he promiſe the ſinner anye other thinge then to bee ſaued, if he from the hart doo repent, beleeue, and purpoſe to walke in a newe life? I think not. Wherfore therefore to thine own Curate if he be honeſt, diſcreete, (and well learned, as I ſaide before) and thinke him to bee that perſon that is appointed of God, to miniſter Chriſts Goſpell and his Sacraments vnto thee, make conuenient times, as shall be needefull to the comfort of thy troubled conscience.

There is also another kinde of priuate Confession, which may aptly be called, the confession of reconciliation. As when I haue offended my christian brother, and haue prouoked him to anger: It is my bounden dutie to reconcile my selfe vnto him, [illegible] my faultes, and desire of him forgiuenesse thereof. This Confession is [illegible] the commaundement of Christ [illegible] it is [illegible] to be [illegible] before.

Confession of reconciliation.

before [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] him selfe. For Christ saith: *If thou offerest thy gift at the Altar, and there remembrest that thy brother hath ought against thee, leave there thine offering, & goe thy way: first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.* [illegible] any acceptable ſeruice or garment to worſhippe vnto him. And ſurelye I haue muche marueiled that the tranſgreſſing of this commaundement of Chriſte, hath conteined almoſte all the whole worlde, becauſe there is ſo muche breache of Charitye, and ſo little regard of mutuall reconciliation and attonement. Happie be ie they that are of God, regenerate and by his holye ſpirite ſhall diſcharge circumſpectly and take good heede that they geue no iuſt occaſion of anger vnto their neighbour. And if they chaunce at any time (as all men ſhall) by their occaſion to prouoke and greue their owne affliction: yet they wil ſeke all meanes to their poſſible power, and with al the ſpede that they can, to be reconciled againe vnto them.

For who knoweth that he can by no meanes obtaine Goddes fauour, vnleſſe he be at one with his neighbour, wil not in this poynte laye all worldlye ſhame apart, and (ſubmitting his obedience vnto the commaundementes of God the) goe to his neighbour, knowledging his fault vnto him, and humbly deſire the forgiuenes of his treſpaſſe? Onlye he that vnfaynedly feareth God, and intendeth earneſtlye to auoyde his diſpleaſure will not ſticke to doe this goodly thinge, but wil be glad to doe it and much more.

Alſo, I think it not vnprofitable for you, if I inſerte the Iudgemente of ſome of the Auncient Fathers touching the Confeſſion of ſinnes.

Chryſoſtome ſayth, I ſay not vnto thee, that thou ſhouldeſt bewray thy ſelfe abroade openlye, neither yet accuſe thy ſelfe before other. But I will that thou obaye the Prophet, which ſayethe, *Shewe vnto the Lord thy waye,* (that is, thy maner of liuing) *therfore confeſſe thy ſinnes before God,* Confeſſe thy ſinnes before the true Iudge, with

Chryſoſtō vpon the 12. to the Heb. the 31. Homely.

with praier from the wrong that thou haſt doone, euen with thy tongue, than in the memorie of thy conſcience. And then at laſt beleeue, that thou mayeſt get mercye, if thou haue them continually in thy minde, thou ſhalte neuer keepe anye euill in thine heart, againſt thy neighbour.

Chryſoſt. vpon the 50 Pſalme.

And furthermore ſaith *Chryſoſtome*, If thou be aſhamed to tell anye man thy ſins, tel them dayly to thy ſoule, I ſay not to thee that thou ſhouldeſt confeſſe thee vnto thy fellowe ſeruaunt, that hee might rebuke thee for them, tell thy ſins vnto God, which healeth them, and if thou doo not tell him them, he knoweth them, for hee was by, when thou diddeſt them.

Againe he ſaith, I deſire and pray you, moſt deare brethren, to confeſſe you ofte vnto the immortall God, and after that yee haue reckoned vp your ſinnes, aske forgiueneſſe and that God will bee mercifull. I doo not lead thee into the common Haule of thy fellowe ſeruants, I compell thee not to open thy treſpaſſes vnto men, rehearſe thy conſcience before God, declare and open thy ſelfe. Shewe thy woundes vnto the moſt excellent Phiſition, and aske of him a medi-

Chriſoſtom vpon the incomprehenſible nature of God in the 5. Hom.

medicine: Shew vnto him that will vpbraide thee of nothing, but wil moſt gentlye heale thee.

It is the office of God onelye to quicken within, and to take awaye ſinne, which ſaithe by the Prophet: *I am hee that putteth away your iniquities.*

Cyrillus vpon Iohn the 11. Chapter.

And the ſame Cyrill ſaith vpon *Iohn* in the 11. Chap. and in the 13. Boke 56. Doubtleſſe it belongeth onelye vnto God to bee able to looſe men from ſinnes, for to what other man is it lawefull to deliuer and quite the breakers of the Lawe from ſinnes, but to him that is the Auctor of the Lawe? And it followeth:

For

to a godly [illegible]

[illegible] when they forgyue [illegible] spirit which [illegible] [illegible] & holdeth [illegible] [illegible] in the [illegible] only to God to forgyue sinnes) and [illegible] the Holy Ghost [illegible] God [illegible] of our health, [illegible] no [illegible] the [illegible] The [illegible] for-geueth synnes, [illegible] in the bodye. And [illegible] to god. He alone forgeueth [illegible] for synnes [illegible] of our [illegible] Messias [illegible] All [illegible]

Ambrose vpon the [illegible] of the Corinthians 12. Chapter

[illegible] in the [illegible] of [illegible] [illegible]

io 3 Christe

96

Chriſte will be our defen-
ce. Therefore I beſeche
that we be once mindful of
theſe thinges, & let us fall
downe lowlye in the ſight
of our holye Sauiour, and
let us bring foorth our
ſinnes roundlye vnto him
that our heauenlye Sa-
uiour maye take them a-
way, and when we haue
confeſſed, let us not
iuſtifie our ſelues in our
Prayer, leaſt we goe awaye
condemned as the Pha-
riſee did. Let us rather
be like the Publicane, and
let us praye, ſo that we
maye deſerue to get for-
giueneſſe of our ſinnes,
let the cryinge of our hart
beat and aſcende vnto the
eares of almightye God.
For

to a ſtoutly Merchaunt,
For with a pure minde he will be pleaſed for the time of Prayer.

It is not now neceſſary to confeſſe, other being preſent, which might beare councell of it, for the ſeeking what be thy ſinnes be in thy thought, let this Iudgement be without the preſence of any bodye, let onely God ſee thee, making thy confeſſion to God which doeth not vpbraide thee for thy ſinnes & caſteth in thy teeth, but looſeth ſinnes for thy Confeſſion.

Chriſoſtom in a ſermon of Confeſſion and penaunce.

Goe and ſhew thee to the Preeſte, &c. who is the true Preeſt, but he that is a Preeſte for euermore after the order of Melchiſedech.

Ambroſe in the third Sermon, vpon Beati immaculati.

[illegible].

What haue I to doe with men, that they shoulde heare my Confessions, as though they shoulde heale all my diseases? Here is a curious and a busie kinde of men, to knowe other mens lyfe, and slowe lothe to amende theyr owne. Wherefore seeke they to heare of me what man I am, which will not heare of thee (O Lorde) what they be.

Austen in the tenth Booke of Confession in the third Chapter.

Christe could not haue bene knowne any other waye, but by forgeuing the people their sinnes. For it is the office of God to forgiue sinnes.

Theophelactus vpon Luke, in the first Chapter.

One surety it belongeth to the vertue of Christe to deliuer men from the filthineſſe of ſinnes, but that they fall not againe a freſhe into them, it perteineth to the cure and labour of the Apoſtles. Saith *Chryſoſtome*, vpon the viij. Chapter, in the liiij. Homilye ſaying: The bondage of ſinne is moſte greeuous, & from it onlye God can deliuer vs. For no man hath power to forgiue ſinnes, ſaue onlye God.

Chryſoſt. vpon the fifth chap. of Mathew fifteen Homely.

We are reconciled and brought in fauour againe with God thorow Chriſte which is the mediatour, that of Enemyes wee might be made Sonnes. And in the vij. Chapter. Neither ſhoulde wee bee deli-

Auſten in his booke called Enchiridion, the 33. chap.

deliuered thorowe him as onelye the mediatoure of God and man, Chriſt Ieſus, if hee were not alſo God. But when *Adam* was made, that is to wit, a righte man, hee needed no mediatoure. But when as ſinne did ſeparate and ſunder mankinde far from God, we muſt be brought in fauoure againe with God by a mediatour and a meane, which was onelye borne without ſinne, liued and was ſlaine, vnto the riſing agayne of the fleſhe and to euerlaſting life.

Chriſoſtom of Lazarus In the 4. Sermon.

Beware thou ſhew any man thy ſinnes, leaſte hee caſt them in thy teeth, and reuile thee for them. Neither thir doe thou confeſſe thee vnto thy fellowe ſeruaunt, that hee mighte tell thy faultes abroade: but to him which is the Lord and Maiſter, which alſo ſuffered for thee, to him that is kinde and gentle, and then ſhewe thy woundes vnto him, which is a Phyſition. And a little after the ſame: God will that thou ſhouldſt tel, not that thou ſhouldſt be puniſhed, but be releaſed and iuſtified,

Chryſoſtom of repentance in the fourth Homely.

Seeing that wee knowe theſe thinges, let vs alwaies flee for ſuccour vnto God, which bothe will and maye take awaye all our greefes and ſinnes. If at any time wee muſt get aske thing of men. thy prayers will passe the seruants with the Porters, and content the flatterers, the Steward and the Officers, and Shofferers, and oftentimes goe a greate waye. I finde a wonderfull thing in Gods [illegible] you may easily get by praising of him, hee will graunt you your petitions and Prayers without any money or cost.

Sainct Ambrose saith; Peter mourned and wept, because hee erred as a man. I finde not what hee sayde, I knowe that hee wept. I reade of his teares, but I reade not of his satisfaction.

Ambrose upon Luke, of repentance in the fourth Homely.

Thou needest no helpers nor Aduocates with

God

Chriſoſtom in the Homely of the going forward of the Goſpell.

God, neither anye greate running about to flatter other men, but though thou bee alone, and haſte no Patrone or Aduocate, and makeſt thy Prayer thy owne ſelfe vnto God, doubteleſſe thou ſhalt obtaine thy purpoſe. For God dooth not ſo eaſilye heare when other praieth for vs, as when wee praye our ſelues, although wee be full of muche euill and vnrighteouſneſſe.

Thus haue I declared vnto you after my ſlender gifte of knowledge bothe the Iudgement of the Auncient Fathers of the Primitiue church, and what I haue read & learned in holye Scripſtory, touching the confeſſion of ſinnes.

Another Confeſſion

Beſides all theſe former ſortes of confeſſion, there was alſo vſed in the primitiue Church, an open Confeſſion: which they that had beene excommunicated for greate and heinous ſinnes, made before the whole congregation at ſuch time as they were reſtored againe to the ſame. But becauſe this is now out of vſe (it is the more to be lamented) I will here ſpeake no more of it. But wheras in the latter ende of your letters, you inſtantlye deſired me to write vnto you, what I thinke of the eare Confeſſion, That is ſo ſtraitlye commaunded among the papiſtes. Namelye to utter my Conſcience plainelye unto you in fewe wordes: I thinke it bringeth manye a ſimple ſoule to the hazarde of damnation. (For doubtleſſe there are manye ſhamefull abuſes therein: of which I wil (by the grace of God) rehearſe two or three which are intollerable.

Abuſes of eare Confeſſion.

1 Firſt, it is commaunded of neceſſitie, which
2 which abhominable commaundement, the ſimple commune people (for lacke of good inſtruction) thinke (for ſo are they deceived by falſe teaching) that without eare confeſſion,

ſion, they cannot but ſtaned, by the ſtrait opinion of neceſſitye of the one partie, and the compulſorye lawes made of ſhrinking Papiſts for the maintenaunce of the ſame, on the other partye, (I knowe this certainlye) bringeth very manye in perplexed and doubtfull ſtraites of conſcience, which (if it be not in time remoued by ye ſweete promiſes of grace in Chriſt) will doubtleſſe
1 driue them to deſperation.
2 And ſecondarilye it is no ſmall bondage of Chriſtian mens conſciences to compell them to remember all theyr ſinnes particularly, with al their circumſtaunces of time, perſon

and

compleate a ſinne, ſo is this ry [illegible] euerye ſin ſeuerallye tolde. Which vpon perſwaſion to the vnlearned people, is not ſmalle to bring many of their ſoules vnto the diuells daunger. For they thinke themſelues bounden in Conſcience (for ſo are they corruptly taught) to confeſſe euerye ſin particularlye by it ſelfe, and to open and declare to their ghoſtlye father, euerye circumſtaunce of the ſame. And yet ſometime for feare, and ſometime for ſhame, they confeſſe not all, but concealeth and hideth ſome offence, which not confeſſed oppreſſeth their weake and feble ſible Conſciences, ſometime thys is ſome yeres opinion, and ſo all that ſpace they thinke themſelues becauſe of that entanglemente to be in the ſtate of damnation, and quite out of Gods fauour. And manye times (if the thinge were thorowelye knowne) it is ſcantlye ſo weighty a matter, as the eating of an egge vpon a Frydaye, ſo deepelye are the Popiſhe traditions printed in their tender Conſciences, eſteeming the breache of them to be a greater offence, thē idolatrye, blaſphemye, periurie, theft, ſlaunder or any tranſgreſſion of Gods holy commaundementes.

Whiche thinge oughte to make all the *Babilonicall* Byſhoppes aſhamed (but ẏ they are paſt all ſhame already) becauſe they ſuffer Gods people to be ſo drowned in ignoraunce, that they can not diſcern the commaundementes of God, frō the dirtye dregs of Papiſticall traditions. And albeit the holy ſcripture alloweth theſe ſortes of Confeſſion that I haue ſpoken of before in this Epiſtle: yet for all that, the prowdeſt Papiſte of them all, cannot finde in holye ſcripture theſe wordes or ſentences: *To his owne Curate whatſoeuer he is: all Sinnes perticularlye: all circumſtan-*

ces

[illegible] & ſuch like traſh. For all theſe are nothing elſe but peculiar patches of Papiſtrye, which I pray God maye be purged againe, and baniſhed out of Chriſtendome, and that ſhortlye.

Finally, beſide the aboueſaide abuſes of eare Confeſſion, the common ſorte of people are therewith this manner of wayes deceiued. Firſte, becauſe they thinke, that their Confeſſion is the cauſe of forgiuenesse of their ſinnes: by reaſon whereof, they blotte out the bleſſed benefite of the paſſion and death of Chriſte our onely Sauiour: which is the onlye ob-

[illegible] of [illegible] [illegible], [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] fully [illegible] that the [illegible] that is, that Fasting, [illegible] [illegible] of [illegible] is the [illegible] and [illegible] to dyvers, equivalents for their [illegible] past, which they have [illegible] to the [illegible] into the hand of [illegible] [illegible] they are Christen, [illegible] it is. that to God [illegible] [illegible] for [illegible] [illegible] so that the [illegible] our [illegible] to [illegible]

in

[illegible]

[illegible] by NICHOLAS [illegible]

[illegible] the eight day of [illegible] ANNO [illegible]

[illegible] endeuour, likewiſe in other matters of holy Scripture, to ſhewe you hereafter my ſmall and ſlender knowledge and iudgement. Thus the liuing God increaſe in you daylie more & more faith, charitie, meekeneſſe, [illegible] kindneſſe and patience. Amen.

From *Geyſer Hauen* in Denmarke the 3. of *Februarye.*

¶ *If you write againe to me write to* Geneua, *for thitherwarde by Gods grace I intend to goe ſhortly.*

Yours in the

Lord. T.C.

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Thomas
[illegible]

Mary the Daughter of
Thomas and Mary Vincent
was Baptized May ye 7 1678